

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action of June 27, 2007. Independent claims 1 and 15 are amended, without change of scope, to clarify that the tented film has a solvent content in the film within a range of 3 to 8 wet base % by weight prior to its being subjected to roll drying. These are non-narrowing amendments. No new subject matter is introduced into the application by this Amendment. Claims 1-4 and 7-17 are pending in the application.

Prior art rejections

Claims 1-4, 7, 8, and 15-17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP 4-286611 (hereinafter JP '611) in view of JP 11-048271 (hereinafter JP '271). Office Action, pages 2-3. Claims 9-14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP '611 in view of JP '271 in view of US 5,806,834 (hereinafter Yoshida). Office Action, pages 3-4. The rejections are respectfully traversed.

Applicant's processing invention improves both the wrinkling characteristics and the cast non-uniformity which occur on a film surface during processing, while avoiding a decrease in processing productivity. Specification, page 4, lines 1-5. An important feature of Applicant's processing invention is that the solvent content of the film being processed is lowered to 3 to 8 wet base % by weight in a non-contact state during tenting processing, and only then is the film – in its low solvent-content state – dried by roll drying, which is carried out by physically contacting the film with a roller.

This important feature of the present invention is neither taught nor suggested by the prior art. For instance, JP '611 discloses, in paragraph [0024] and its abstract, that the solvent content in its film is equal to or lower than 10% after the film is dried in the first and second drying chambers 12, 13 where the roll drying is performed. Thus, the film in JP '611 contacts the rollers in an area where the solvent content in the film is equal to or higher than 10%. The problem of cast non-uniformity cannot be resolved by such processing.

In contrast to this prior art, in the present invention, the solvent content of the film is lowered to 3 to 8 wet base % by weight before roll drying (i.e., before the film contacts a roller). This is a significant difference from the processing in the prior art.

In summary, an important manner of preventing cast non-uniformity, which is a problem that is solved by the present invention, is that solvent content is extremely low – only 3 to 8 wet base % by weight – at the time of beginning roll drying of the film. Also, pursuant to the present invention, tentering processing – in which the film is conveyed by its end portions – is carried out until the solvent content is lowered to the required value. Neither JP ‘611 nor JP ‘271 nor Yoshida teach or suggest these important features of the present invention. In JP ‘611, which appears to be the closest prior art, the solvent content is reduced below 10% only by drying in the first and second drying chambers.

Additional considerations

All of the claims herein require, among many other things, that “a rate of expansion of the film in a conveying direction of the film is kept within a range of -2% to 3%.” The Examiner addresses this feature of the claims by stating that “Japanese -611 discloses stretching to eliminate any flaws in the film already produced therein. Presumably, this stretching would occur at a very low extension and would be inclusive of ... zero stretching.” Office Action, page 4. This appears to be a contention that the disclosure of stretching to eliminate flaws in JP ‘611 would suggest zero stretching (i.e., not conducting stretching) to persons of ordinary skill in the art. The Examiner is respectfully requested to clarify his position in this regard.

JP ‘611 teaches roll drying a film in first and second drying chambers 12 and 13. Claims 15-17 herein require, among other things, “subjecting the tentered film to roll drying in a single drying zone.” Claims 15-17 distinguish over the prior art for the reasons discussed with respect to claims 1-4 and 7-14 as well as for the additional reason of requiring a *single* drying zone.

Claim 7 expressly requires that “the solvent content in the film at beginning of the roll drying after the tentering is 4 to 7 wet base % by weight.” Nothing in the prior art teaches or

suggest this low solvent content at the *beginning* of roll drying.

Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and objections and that they be withdrawn. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Richard Gallagher, Reg. No. 28,781, at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37.C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.14; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

By 

Marc S. Weiner

Registration No.: 32,181

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

8110 Gatehouse Road

Suite 100 East

Falls Church, Virginia 22040-0747

(703) 205-8000

Attorney for Applicant